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Environment and sustainable development: implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Letter dated 29 September 1999 from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the Second Committee

I have the honour to draw to your attention, for appropriate action by the Second Committee, the following decision, adopted by the General Assembly at the 5th plenary meeting of its twenty-second special session, held on 28 September 1999:

> "At the 5th plenary meeting of its twenty-second special session, on 28 September 1999, the General Assembly decided to take note of the letter dated 24 September 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly and of the annex thereto (A/S-22/6), and decided to transmit the letter and its annex to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session for further consideration by the Second Committee under the agenda item entitled "Environment and sustainable development".

(*Signed*) Theo-Ben **Gurirab**

99-29687 (E) 181099

Annex

Letter dated 24 September 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

You may be aware that, in the context of preparations for the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, interested delegations have been conducting open-ended consultations on the question of a draft resolution on the Caribbean Sea, originally proposed for consideration by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Mexico. The delegation of Canada was honoured to have served, at the request of interested delegations, as facilitator of open-ended informal consultations on this matter.

I am pleased to submit to you for your attention the attached text which reflects the state of consultations on this question as of 24 September 1999 (see appendix). As you will note, it includes bracketed elements on which further work will be required before any final agreement is secured.

(*Signed*) Robert R. **Fowler**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Appendix

Twenty-second special session of the General Assembly devoted to the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Guyana* and Mexico: draft resolution

Alt. 1: [Recognition of the Caribbean Sea [region] as a special area in the context of sustainable devclopment]

Alt. 2: [Promoting an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea in the context of sustainable development]

The General Assembly,

1. *Reaffirming* the principles and commitments enshrined in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992,[a] and the principles embodied in the Declaration of Barbados[b] and Programme of Action[c] adopted by the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 1994, as well as other relevant declarations and international instruments,

(need to make reference to the International Maritime Organization somewhere in the resolution)

2. [*Taking into account* all other relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly,]

(paragraph to be deleted or to be integrated with preambular paragraph 1 or 3, or all other relevant resolutions should be spelled out)

3. *Reaffirming also* the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,[d]

4. *Recalling* that the Caribbean Sea is defined by the Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, adopted in 1983,

5. *Considering* that the Caribbean Sea comprises a large number of States, countries and territories, most of which are developing countries and small island developing States, which are [vulnerable and also] affected by, *inter alia*, their limited capacity, narrow resource bases, need for financial resources, social problems, high levels of poverty and the challenges and opportunities of globalization,

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* On behalf of the States Members that are members of the Group of 77 and China.

[a] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex I.

[b] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, annex I.

[c] Ibid., annex II.

[d] *Official Records of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea*, vol. XVII (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.84.V.3), document A/CONF.62/122.

6. *Considering also* that the Caribbean Sea, with nearly all of its area separated from the open ocean by either continental or insular land masses, is characterized by [the semi-enclosed nature of the Sea] a unique biodiversity and highly fragile ecosystems, such as the second largest coral reef system in the world, the heavy reliance of most of the States, countries and territories in the Caribbean region on their coastal areas and the marine environment in general to achieve their sustainable development needs and goals, the number and interlocking character of the maritime areas under national sovereignty and jurisdiction in the Caribbean Sea, which present a challenge for the effective management of the resources, the intensive use of the Caribbean Sea for maritime transportation and, notwithstanding the increase in regulatory measures, the threat of pollution from ship-generated waste as well as [accidental][any] release of hazardous and noxious substances,

7. *Emphasizing* that the Caribbean countries have a high degree of vulnerability occasioned by climate change and variability, associated phenomena, such as sea level rise, the El Niño Southern Oscillation Phenomenon and the increase in the frequency and intensity [of natural disasters caused by][of] hurricanes, floods and droughts, [and they are also subject to natural disasters such as those caused by] volcanoes, tsunamis and earthquakes,

8. *Mindful* of the strong interaction and competition in the countries of the region among socio-economic activities for the use of coastal areas and the marine environment and their resources,

9. *Mindful* also of the efforts of the Caribbean countries to address, in a more holistic manner, the sectoral issues relating to the management of the Caribbean Sea and in so doing to promote an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea for sustainable development,

10. *Cognizant* of the importance of the Caribbean Sea as the heritage of present and future generations of people living in the Caribbean and its importance to the continuing economic well-being and sustenance of these people and of the urgent need to take appropriate steps for its preservation and protection by the countries of the region with the support of the international community:

1. *Alternative 1*: *Recognizes* the importance of an integrated management approach for achieving the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea;

Alternative 2: *Decides* to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, deserving of appropriate protection while being sensitive to the requirements of all users;

Alternative 3: *Decides* to recognize that the Caribbean Sea is an area of sea of great importance for sustainable development, as envisaged in the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, deserving of appropriate protection while being sensitive to the requirements of all users and in compatibility with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea;

1 *bis*. *Encourages* the further development of the integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea in the context of sustainable development, which will include, *inter alia*, environmental, economic, social, legal and institutional elements;

2. *Calls upon* the international community and the United Nations system, in particular the relevant agencies, actively to support the efforts [to develop further and implement this approach,][of the Caribbean countries to further develop an integrated and holistic approach to the sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea as envisaged in the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,

by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session and in conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,];

3. *Alternative 1*: *Calls upon* Member States to give priority to improving their emergency response capabilities to allow for a timely, effective and coordinated response [to natural disasters as well as the need to contain][aimed at containing] environmental damage in the Caribbean Sea in the event of an accident or incident relating to maritime transport;

(need to make reference to increasing participation in currently existing mechanisms)

Alternative 2: *Calls upon* Member States to give priority to improving their emergency response capabilities and to increasing their participation in existing mechanisms in order to allow for a timely, effective and coordinated response to natural disasters and for containment of environmental damage in the Caribbean Sea in the event of an accident or incident relating to maritime transport;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session and to the Commission on Sustainable Development on the implementation of the present resolution, taking into account the views expressed by the relevant regional organizations.

(Need to make reference to linking reporting in the overall context of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the follow-up to the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly)